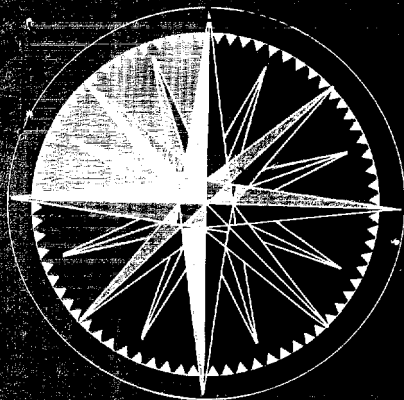


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SPECIAL REPORT

THE PEOPLE AROUND INDIAN PRIME MINISTER SHASTRI

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

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THE PEOPLE AROUND INDIAN PRIME MINISTER SHASTRI

Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri's immediate political associates, although essentially the same group which surrounded Nehru in his later years, will exercise more influence now than they were permitted to under Nehru. The type of regime and the lines of policy likely to evolve in the months ahead will depend heavily on the personal and political relationships between the mild, moderate, new prime minister and his more colorful colleagues and on the strength of the political base which they provide his government. Shastri's position at present is that of first among equals. In time he will probably assume a more distinctive role, and the make-up of the group may change. He is not likely at any time, however, to eclipse the other luminaries as Nehru did.

The Congress Party Background

Shastri's relations with other leaders arise out of the character and organization of their party, the Indian National Congress. Sponsored by the British in 1885 somewhat as a gentlemen's debating society, the Congress movement eventually became, under Gandhi and Nehru, the vehicle for attaining independence. Since 1947, it has ruled the country. Organizationally, it is very much a political party in the Western parliamentary sense; in essence, however, it remains a broadly based, national movement reflecting both the consensus and the divisions in Indian society.

Under Nehru's commanding tutelage, the government in New Delhi displaced the Congress movement as the center of Indian national political life. In his earliest struggles with other party leaders following

Gandhi's death in 1948, and thereafter, Nehru fought to make the government institutions--the cabinet and the ministries--the centers of decision instead of the Congress' heretofore dominant policy-making organs.

Nehru believed that such a transfer of power was essential if an enduring, indigenous, and democratic central government were to be established in the face of the subcontinent's long and stormy history of divisiveness. Much of the decision-making power moved to the government only because Nehru chose to exercise it there. The power was not as much the government's as his. The party acquiesced; several strong men left, and the rest bided their time. The government, in its countless daily choices, gave substance to the party's broad aims and distributed the spoils of power. The national party under Nehru became chiefly a vehicle for attaining or

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retaining positions in the governmental power structure.

The alliance which brought Shastri to power is an alliance of party, as distinct from government forces, and in this sense is a reaction against the Nehru era. It is composed at the top of a number of consummate politicians who, under Nehru, often seemed to chafe at the decline of party versus government power at the national level as compared to the states, where the party remained generally central. Nehru's penchant for leadership without consultation was particularly galling to them.

The Kamaraj Plan

This "proparty" reaction began to make headway last year under the leadership of then Chief Minister Kamaraj of Madras State, long the kingpin of south Indian politics. He authored last August's "Kamaraj Plan," which was an attempt partially to redress the balance between party and national government. In response to mounting concern about the loss of party vitality at the grass roots--signaled by the loss of several prestige by-elections--Kamaraj proposed to Nehru that a number of leading ministerial figures in the central and the state governments resign their posts to devote full time to party work, and, by their example, to discourage others from the all-consuming pursuit of portfolios.

Kamaraj is also said to have suggested the appointment

of four regional party vice presidents, each to concern himself with the area he knew best. Kamaraj was particularly concerned over the party's position in his own state, where he sensed the opening of a gulf between the common people, to whom he was close, and the party workers. He no doubt fancied himself as party vice president for the south. For the east, west, and north, he reportedly favored Bengal strong-man Atulya Ghosh, Bombay boss S. K. Patil, and north India's "untouchable" leader, Jagjivan Ram, respectively.

Nehru apparently saw some value in Kamaraj's scheme, and saw also that it afforded an opportunity to ditch some troublesome ministers. He evidently saw some problems too, especially in the concept of regional vice presidents, which he never implemented. Nor did he ever fully subscribe to the idea of enhancing the party's power relative to the government's--i.e., his own--as the proposals implied. The immediate effect of the program, as implemented, was to enhance Nehru's stature--the party put the choice of resignees in his hands--and to give him an excuse to get rid of certain ministers.

The longer range impact of the Kamaraj plan has been considerable, especially on Shastri's position now. Even though Shastri and the then heir presumptive, Finance Minister Morarji Desai, left the cabinet at the same time, it became evident as time passed that Shastri owed less of his influence

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to his former cabinet post than Desai did. Shastri retained Nehru's personal favor, moreover, while Desai never had it. Desai's relative decline, therefore, had the effect of boosting Shastri into position as the leading contender for Nehru's mantle at a time when Nehru had less than a year to live.

Kamaraj himself became Congress Party president last November, moving into a key position to assert the will of the south in high party circles and, following Nehru's death, to dominate the process of choosing a new prime minister.

The Kamaraj Plan also involved the ouster of long-time Kashmiri strong-man Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad. This move has already had consequences--particularly the rehabilitation of the Kashmiri leader Sheikh Abdullah and his efforts to resolve the Kashmir problem--that present the new prime minister with some of his most urgent and demanding challenges.

The Shastri Coalition

The main party figures in the Shastri coalition are Kamaraj, Atulya Ghosh, and S. K. Patil. All three have been working well together for some time, although their most substantial bonds appear to have been forged during the past year. Patil seconded the formal resolution of the Congress Party's Working Committee inaugurating the Kamaraj Plan last August, and Patil and Ghosh com-

bined forces in November to bring about Kamaraj's selection as party president. At the crucial Working Committee session on 31 May, four days after Nehru's death, it was Patil who reportedly caught the Desai forces unaware with his proposal that Kamaraj poll party members on the choice of a successor to Nehru. This made it a foregone conclusion that an actual vote would be avoided--even though Shastri had the votes--and that Shastri would succeed unanimously to the prime ministership. The trio have since been among the new prime minister's most frequent consultants.

Of the three, the 61-year-old Kamaraj is most important and closest to Shastri. A simple-living and poorly educated Madras bachelor of low caste, Kamaraj was a leading figure in his state from the earliest days of the independence movement. It was not until 1954, however, that he emerged from his more customary kingmaker's role in the state party structure to become chief minister in his own right. He held the post for nearly ten years, compiling a record of outstanding accomplishment in terms of economic development and honest, efficient administration. Somewhat crude in demeanor, he is at his best speaking with common people in earthy Tamil; like Shastri, he has an inner toughness which is glossed over by an easygoing manner, a forgiving nature, and a characteristic deference to those whose dress, language, and education are better than his.

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His influence, like Ghosh's and to a lesser extent Patil's, will be felt more in the gritty work of practical politics, where much remains to be done to reduce factionalism, than in the formulation of broad policy and programs. Party work was the area which the aristocratic Nehru most often shunned, but in which Shastri himself is quite expert.

It was Kamaraj rather than Shastri who forged the Shastri coalition in the period following Nehru's first stroke last January. It was Kamaraj's skill, his influence, and the south's weight behind him which tipped the balance decisively in favor of the northerner Shastri in a succession struggle which revived something of the historic tug of war between western and northern India for control of the Congress movement. Kamaraj does not appear to aspire to the prime ministry himself, an apparently genuine acknowledgment of the limitations his background and his lack of fluency in English and Hindi impose.

Ghosh--Atulya Babu, as he is generally known in India--is another organization man who has usually stayed behind the scenes. He more than any other is responsible for the party's organization in Bengal and especially for its election triumphs in the Communist areas of Calcutta in 1962. He is a ward heeler of the old school, with few of the attributes of a standard bearer, but with all of the skills needed to de-

liver the right vote at the right time for the right candidate.



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In recent years, Ghosh has expanded his purview to include Bengal's neighboring states--Assam, Orissa, and Bihar. His recent falling out with the boss of Orissa has diminished his influence in that state, but elsewhere in eastern India he remains strong.

Ghosh does not appear to have fared noticeably well in the construction of Shastri's first cabinet, which emphasized continuity rather than change. More than likely, he has some assurances about future adjustments.

S. K. Patil, the third member of the trio, is the only one who has actually gone beyond being an effective party man with a regional base--his bailiwick is Bombay Island--to national office. Closely associated with Sardar Patel, the dominant voice in western India until his death in the early 1950s, "S. K." was nurtured on the hard realities of ward politics in Bombay.

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Always a colorful though controversial figure, Patil was an efficient minister of food and agriculture in Nehru's

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penultimate cabinet. He enjoys wide popularity with the rank and file in Parliament and with party figures around the country whom he has aided in many ways during his tenure as party treasurer. Shastri has brought him back into the cabinet in the number five slot with the railways portfolio, which should not take too much of his time or energy. Patil is credited with a major role in nailing down Defense Minister Chavan's support for Shastri prior to the crucial party session on 31 May. Chavan is a fellow Marathi and a former protégé of Shastri's rival, former Finance Minister Desai.

Alone of the trio, Patil is a man of pronounced views on the substance of policy, is almost excessively pro-Western, and is publicly unimpressed with the London School of Economics socialism of the Congress left. He forms the right anchor in a primarily middle-of-the-road cabinet.

Shastri's Relationship With Party Bosses

Shastri's coalition is thus a loose group of strong-minded, party-oriented, regional bosses whose main aim is to ensure for themselves a greater voice than Nehru allowed them in the determination of national

policy affecting their vital interests. This, in fact, was their main bond against the candidacy of Desai, whose rigid and domineering personality would, they feared, eventually put them at the same disadvantage as Nehru's had.

The risks of this bargain for Shastri and for the government structure he must now supervise are obvious. The bosses will have to be satisfied, at least partially; yet the government cannot always bow to purely political considerations and regional interests, which often conflict. The interplay of interests at the center will be a radically different kind of politics than was played under Nehru, and will involve Shastri in delicate compromise--a maneuver in which he is acknowledged to be without peer in the Indian power structure. It will also call for firmness, including the capacity to say "no" and make it stick when the national interest requires that regional considerations give way.

The forms of this kind of politics are available in the Congress Party structure and in Indian parliamentary practice. Shastri's major task will be to fill them with genuine political content where Nehru, going his own way, often left them largely empty. The prospects for the

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THE INDIAN CABINET
(26 June 1964)

Portfolio	Minister	Age
Prime Minister, Minister of External Affairs, Chairman of Atomic Energy Commission	Lal Bahadur Shastri *	59
Minister of Home Affairs	Gulzarilal Nanda *	65
Minister of Finance	T. T. Krishnamachari	63
Minister of Information and Broadcasting	Indira Gandhi *	49
Minister of Industry, Engineering, and Technical Development	Sardar Swaran Singh	56
Minister of Railways	S. K. Patil *	63
Minister of Law and Social Security	A. K. Sen	50
Minister of Defense	Y. B. Chavan *	50
Minister of Steel and Mines	Sanjiva Reddy *	51
Minister of Food and Agriculture	C. Subramaniam	54
Minister of Petroleum and Chemicals	Humayun Kabir	58
Minister of Communications and Parliamentary Affairs	Satyanarain Sinha	63
Minister of Irrigation and Power	H. C. Dasappa	69
Minister of Education	M. C. Chagla	63
Minister of Labor and Employment	D. Sanjivayya *	43
Minister of Rehabilitation	Mahavir Tyagi	64

Names in red identify ministers who were members of previous government.

Names followed by an asterisk identify ministers who are
also on the 19-member Congress Party Working Committee,
the party organization's top policy making body.

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long-term survival of both the party as an effective grass-roots force and of Indian parliamentary democracy may well hang on Shastri's success or failure in this effort.

A factor in his favor is the commitment he shares with his supporters to flexibility and pragmatism. Another is the simple fact that he is the only figure they could all agree on for the prime minister's job. And third is the fact that there are a number among them whose interests are more in methods and public reactions than in what is done and who will be inclined to leave matters of substance for Shastri and others to work out.

The Inner Cabinet

Shastri's first cabinet numbers 16 ministers (see facing page). An inner circle will doubtless develop quickly, composed of ministers who, either because of their portfolios or their political influence, will determine the specific lines of the government's policies.

All of Nehru's ministers have been retained, and the chief candidates among them for the inner circle will be Home Minister G. L. Nanda, the second-ranking member of the cabinet, Finance Minister T.T. Krishnamachari, ranking third, and Defense Minister Y. B. Chavan, eighth. Of these, only Chavan is a power in his own right, still managing at a

distance the affairs of his own state of Maharashtra where he was chief minister until he assumed the defense portfolio in 1962. Although his support was not necessary to put Shastri over the top in the succession struggle, it was fatal to Desai's candidacy.

Slow to take hold of the bureaucracy in the Defense Ministry, Chavan probably aspires to be prime minister himself some day. At 50 he has time, however, and is not likely to get in Shastri's way. Their views on the need for a strong defense as well as on the value of a flexible, pragmatic approach are quite close.

Nanda, a 65-year-old former labor leader, was the left anchor--excepting Nehru himself--of Nehru's last cabinet. He has carried over his second-ranking position--derived mainly from long if unspectacular service--into Shastri's cabinet, and he has the satisfaction of having assured himself a place in the record books as India's second, albeit interregnum, prime minister. He has no independent base of power; Desai controls his home state. Nanda nonetheless enjoys considerable respect because of his position, his integrity, his dedication to socialism, his patronage of India's wandering ascetics, and his earnest performance during the succession controversy. He remains to the left of Shastri and addicted to the slogans of the party's documents, which

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Party President Kamaraj, in foreground, presiding over party meeting on 31 May. Left to right in background are Jagjivan Ram, U. N. Dhebar, Morarji Desai, and G. L. Nanda.

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S. K. PATIL



INDIRA GANDHI



ATULYA GHOSH

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have always been considerably to the left of party action. Although his ties with the party left are not tight, his advice in general will be consistent with left-wing thinking and prejudices.

Krishnamachari--"T. T. K." --is a 63-year-old Madrasi Brahman with long and close ties to Kamaraj. He is a highly urbane, articulate, and flamboyant technician whose views on financial matters should carry considerable weight with the new prime minister. He appreciates more than many the role the private sector can play in India's economic development, and his approach, like Shastri's, is one in which results count for more than slogans and ideologies.

Indira Gandhi, Nehru's 49-year-old daughter, was personally persuaded by Shastri to enter the government, mainly as a gesture of continuity with Nehru's policies. Her fourth-ranking position, right behind Nanda and Krishnamachari, is strong evidence that she will be given the opportunity to play an important role in the inner group if she chooses. She will be looked to by the Congress left to voice their views and even to displace Nanda in this respect. Although her views are probably quite close to those of her father, her relationship with the extreme left of the party has usually been one-way--the leftists seeking to advance their cause through

her prominence and her closeness to her father rather than the reverse. While she is said to have favored delay in choosing a prime minister, there appears to be nothing in her long personal relationship with Shastri or in her views on problems facing the government to keep them from working together.

In time Indira Gandhi may take the external affairs post and thus bring her influence more directly to bear on foreign policy matters. For now, however, Shastri has retained the portfolio for himself, evidently preferring to keep the delicate Kashmir question in his own hands and hoping to speed up his own education in a field in which his previous experience has left him weak.

The two other cabinet members who may come to have influence with the prime minister are Food Minister Subramaniam (Nehru's minister of steel) and Steel Minister Sanjiva Reddy, formerly chief minister of Andhra State. Able and ambitious, both are in their early fifties and are reckoned as part of Kamaraj's stable.

S. K. Patil, ranked sixth, will also be in the inner circle. Another possibility, though not yet a member of the cabinet, is former Praja Socialist Party leader Ashok Mehta, now deputy chief of the Planning Commission and recently re-admitted to the Congress Party.

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Shastri and President Radhakrishnan after Shastri was sworn in as prime minister on 9 June 1964. Home Minister Nanda is behind the president.

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Other Figures

Three party figures of national stature remain outside the cabinet and outside the Shastri camp in the party. One is V. K. Krishna Menon, former defense minister, who with Nehru's death lost the only influential

friend he had in the power structure. Menon had already been badly hurt by the death of Dr. Baliga, a physician, his long-time financial "angel," earlier in the same month. Still vocal in the wings, the leftist group of which Menon is often the spokesman opposed Shastri's election, even joining for a time with Desai in

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a delaying maneuver. Shastri has been unreceptive to their subsequent overtures, and seems content to leave Menon and his followers out in the cold.

At the other pole is Morarji Desai, whose price for inclusion in the Shastri cabinet was apparently higher than Shastri was willing to pay. Desai has some marginal potential for trouble-making, especially should Shastri suffer a setback on some aspect of India-Pakistan-Kashmir relations. However, he has lost the fourth and apparently final round of what, in retrospect, appears to have been a three-year-long succession struggle and at 67 has little open to him but a gradual slide into [] obscurity.

The third leader outside the fold is Jagjivan Ram, who, until being "Kamaraj-ed" last August, was second only to Nehru in length of ministerial service. Ram's main claim to influence derives from his status as unofficial spokesman of the Harijans --the "untouchables." He sought several alliances in an effort

to stop Shastri in the week following Nehru's death, even in the end tossing his own cap into the ring. Ram will continue to function as a prominent member of Parliament, but his future is mostly behind him; Shastri's carry-over minister of labor and employment, D. Sanjivayya, is an "untouchable" too, and only one per cabinet is needed.

The President

India's President, 74-year-old Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, will work well with Shastri. Although the presidency is officially neutral, there can be little doubt that Shastri would have been Radhakrishnan's choice. The President reportedly insisted on a quick decision consistent with the need for continuity and the establishment of enduring precedents. Although Radhakrishnan's ability to influence policy is limited by his constitutional position and his health, his personality, erudition, and prestige will lend more weight to his counsel to the new, younger prime minister than it carried with the paramount Nehru. []

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